



Trash-Free Festival on the Eno

Eno River, NC – Special Event Case Study

MassDEP Municipal Waste Reduction Outreach Toolkit



2007 marks the 28th year of the Festival for the Eno in Durham, North Carolina. Each year, for 3 days anchored by the 4th of July, approximately 40,000 people from around the State come to the West Point on the Eno to dance, eat, hear live music, browse great crafts and learn about regional environmental topics.

Organized by the Eno River Association, the Festival for the Eno offers an array of activities with an underlying theme of community action and environmental awareness. Festival exhibits, activities and programs highlight the relationship between the river, the surrounding land (its watershed), and the community. The premise of these educational programs and activities is that participation will foster ecological awareness. It is believed that increased awareness and understanding of one's environment leads to informed choices and ecologically responsible behavior.

In 1992, the Association made a commitment to reduce its landfill-bound waste, striving to offer a "Trash-Free" Festival for the Eno. A collaborative effort of organizers, sponsors, vendors, volunteers and participants is undertaken to minimize the amount of waste generated during the Festival, and to recycle or compost as many materials as possible.

How the "Trash-Free" Festival Works

Educating and working with vendors - Most of the waste from the Festival is generated as a result of food and beverage vending. Festival organizers and vendors work together before and during the Festival to reduce excess packaging and other waste, and to ensure that food service items such as plates and cups are recyclable or compostable wherever possible. Other exhibitors are also encouraged to recycle. Making recycling easy and educational for participants

Instead of traditional garbage cans, the Festival provides a number of recycling stations throughout the grounds. The recycling stations have separate receptacles for each of the material types generated at the Festival. The majority of recycling stations are monitored by volunteers to ensure that materials are properly placed. These volunteers are a vital link in the success of the program, as they also serve to educate Festival participants about the importance of proper separation and answer specific questions. Materials recycled at the recycling stations include glass bottles, aluminum cans, corrugation, newsprint and compostables (food scraps, paper plates and paper cups). Materials such as cardboard packaging are recovered directly from the vendors for recycling.

Securing local outlets for recovered materials - The final component of the Trash-Free Festival is the collection and processing of recovered materials. Another team of recycling volunteers is assembled to collect the materials from the recycling stations at the necessary intervals. Prior to the Festival, the Association arranges with several local companies or organizations to recycle or compost the recovered materials. Only a fraction (9%) of the total materials generated at the Festival ends up at the landfill

The compost made from the Festival's food waste is processed at a nearby site, and the resulting product is used during subsequent Festivals for display and educational purposes. In this way, Festival-goers are able to actually see the results of their participation in the Trash-Free program.

Program Results - The Festival for the Eno has reduced its waste by over 90% since initiating the Trash-Free program. This remarkable achievement can be attributed to the partnership between organizers, sponsors, vendors and volunteers, and the active participation of the Festival attendees. The Eno River Association will continue to expand on its Trash-Free program, aiming for maximum waste reduction. Similar results can be achieved at other community events with the proper planning and cooperation.

A Handbook - "Developing Trash-Free Special Events-A Planning Guide for North Carolina Communities and Event Planners" is available for download here: <http://www.enoriver.org/Festival/trash.html>

This handbook includes:

- information on making an event “trash free”,
- how to identify materials for recycling at your event,
- getting volunteers and your community involved,
- information on contracting and working with vendors for your event,
- how to design effective recycling stations,
- a timeline for putting it all together,
- as well as sample documents and contracts for vendors, case studies and press coverage of the events.

Published by the [Eno River Association](#), with the aid of the [N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources](#) this book outlines strategies and timelines useful in adapting the success of the Trash-Free program for your special event. Funding for this project was provided in part through a grant from the North Carolina Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance.